



Ethnobotanical Leaflets



Tang Center for Herbal Medicine Research and Tang Professorship established at the University of Chicago

By Miriam Kritzer Van Zant

University of Chicago (UC) Hospitals has always stood for one thing, excellence in medicine. That medicine has tended to be conservative in the extreme, a cautious hedge against scientifically untested wishful thinking including that of the popular new age kind. It still is. But something new has been added to the roster. Shutsung Liao, PhD, a long time researcher in the Ben May Institute for Cancer Research, and professor in Biochemistry & Molecular Biology, is first to hold the Tang Professorship in Herbal Medicine. He will also be the first Director of the Tang Center for Herbal Medicine Research.

The purpose of the Center will be to verify the effects of traditional eastern herbs, many of which are now becoming popular in the United States. In an article in *Legacy*, Winter 1,999-2,000, a newsletter for UC hospitals, it is stated that one out of three Americans use herbal products of some kind but not even one out of 3,000 scientific studies address non-traditional therapies.

Liao is an expert on androgens, male hormones. He is particularly interested in agents to block the effects of testosterone on the prostate gland. As a result he has studied epigallocatechins or EGCGs from green tea. EGCGs, induced significant shrinkage when injected into both human prostate and breast tumors that had been implanted into rats. He is interested in ginseng and has isolated several active ginsenosides from American ginseng. In the *Legacy* article, Dr. Liao said, researchers in the Tang Center will not simply target specific herbs or diseases. Instead, we will see where our basic research on different aspects of herbal medicine leads us. Chun-Su Yuan, MD, PhD and Assistant Professor in Anesthesiology & Critical Care has also been appointed to the Tang Center.

Funding for the Center and the Professorship, has come in the form of a \$5 million gift from the Tang Family Foundation and the Tang Foundation for the Research of Traditional Chinese Medicine. Both foundations were founded by businessman Cyrus Tang, whose company Tang Industries, Inc includes industrial, pharmaceutical, furniture and real estate holdings. He is also on the board of directors for AK Steel, a major U.S. steel producer.

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